

Protests sweep Greece as teachers, workers and youth join Europe-wide upsurge

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Striking teachers, hospital doctors and public sector workers marched alongside tens of thousands of school and university students in more than 50 towns and cities across Greece on Wednesday. The protests are part of an upsurge of the class struggle across Europe.

The primary teachers' federation, DOE, called a 24-hour strike, while the secondary teachers' federation, OLME, held a three-hour stoppage from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The public sector union federation ADEDY called a stoppage from 11 a.m. to the end of the shift, and hospital doctors in the OENGE federation staged a nationwide strike. Workers throughout Greece's cultural sector held a 24-hour strike. Five-hundred pensioners rallied in Athens' Kotzia Square before marching to the Health Ministry.

Around 20,000 mainly young people took part in the main protest in Athens. Thousands more marched in Thessaloniki and Patras. Rallies were also held in Larissa, Volos, Ioannina and Nafplio, and on the islands of Crete, Rhodes and Kos. Student associations meeting afterwards at the Thessaloniki Labour Centre resolved to join an October 30 international day of action against war and genocide in 60 ports worldwide.

In a statement Thursday, ADEDY said that "tens of thousands of educators" had struck, that "hundreds of schools" were closed and that it was "one of the largest strikes in the education sector in recent years."

Teachers demand the filling of 15,000 vacancies, permanent contracts for substitute teachers, smaller classes, safe school buildings, a 20 percent pay rise and the restoration of the now abolished 13th and 14th "holiday" monthly salaries. They demand education spending be increased from 3.3 to 5 percent of GDP. According to the DOE, teachers' purchasing power has fallen by almost 60 percent, with nearly half living on salaries of €1,000 a month or less.

The cultural sector workers demand that state spending on culture be raised to 1 percent of the national budget, alongside higher wages, permanent jobs for contract workers and an end to outsourcing. They also oppose the transfer of public cultural responsibilities to private companies and demand the return of five major state museums to the Archaeological Service.

Hospital doctors demanded pay rises and permanent hiring, and pensioners the restoration of the 13th and 14th month

pensions.

Speaking to the Associated Press, teacher Ioannis Rompas said, "Today we are striking because this situation can't continue for our families, with the high costs, with us struggling to make it to the end of the month, with the situation in schools which is deteriorating exponentially year after year."

As in France, Belgium and Spain, the movement is dominated by young people, driven by the slashing of education spending and the intolerable rise in the cost of living. On Tuesday evening, students pitched tents in Syntagma Square, Athens, and in Thessaloniki and Patras under the banner, "Greece and France, uprising everywhere—the same problems, the same enemy."

One banner in Athens read, "From Greece to France, give money to education." In solidarity with youth and students fighting the Macron regime, others held up placards in French reading, "To study or to survive; Beauty is in the street" and "The world is ours".

Millions of workers remain poor long after Greece's debt crisis and the 2009–2018 peak years of a savage austerity offensive. Reuters noted that the average monthly salary of €1,500 "remains stuck at the 2009 level."

Successive conservative New Democracy (ND), social democratic PASOK and Syriza (Coalition of Radical Left) governments slashed wages, with the minimum now standing at €920 a month. *Le Monde* reported that rents have risen by more than 115 percent in Athens and 93 percent in Thessaloniki over the past decade. Fuel prices have soared with the war against Iran.

"Surviving here is very difficult, the rent is really high, the houses are really small. Our parents can't make ends meet to pay for our rent, the electricity, for our life here," university student Georgia Foukidou, 21, told Reuters.

Students demand a €500 monthly housing allowance, lower rents, more student residences, free meals and transport, and increased university funding. Engineering student Panagiotis Moschonas, 20, told AP that the government "says that it is allegedly helping students, with a rent subsidy of 120 euros (\$135) per month. That isn't even enough for half a rent, and it's also given at the end of the year."

On Sunday, Health Minister Adonis Georgiadis blamed the

unrest in France on “a mix of migrants of various generations” and their “far-left allies,” warning, “Let those who here invest in political instability and chaos see this!” On Monday, ND Secretary Konstantinos Kyranakis declared there was “no way we will let our homeland become like the streets of Paris.”

The state responded with a massive show of force. Before the main march in Athens, police announced that 3,000 officers would be deployed, including MAT (Units for the Reinstatement of Order) and the YMET riot squads, backed by DRASI motorcycle teams. Drones would transmit live footage to police headquarters, and “Aiantes” water cannon vehicles—bought from Israel—were readied for deployment.

Young people heading to the rally were stopped and searched. *Naftemporiki* reported 25 “preventive” detentions in Athens. At least 10 people were detained in Thessaloniki. Central underground stations were closed at police request.

Riot police attacked youth protesters indiscriminately, using baton, tear gas and firing stun grenades in Athens’ Omonia Square. Video by photojournalist Romanos Lioutas shows a police officer throwing a stun grenade inside Omonia metro station, then waving as it explodes, as people tried to protect themselves.

An additional 1,400 police have been assigned to Attica this year, and 60 new buses placed on order for transporting riot-unit officers.

ND Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared ahead of the mass protest, “Greece will never again return to the days of major social unrest, to the days of the populists.” Declaring his government had “the fiscal capacity to support Greek households,” he added, “We are not magicians who can solve every problem.”

The “fiscal capacity” he boasts of is being poured into war. Greece is implementing a €25 billion, 12-year rearmament programme—a staggering cost of about €240 per adult per year over the 12 years. Updated NATO data published in July put Greece’s core military spending this year at 3.65 percent of GDP—one of only five members spending above 3.5 percent. It has a target of 5 percent through 2030.

In *Efimerida ton Syntakton* (*Newspaper of the Editors*) Thursday, under the headline “Decades of austerity for the sake of... war: The heavy cost of military spending and aid to Ukraine,” writer Panos Kosmas warned that the new “mammoth” procurement programme, running to 2032, and aid to Ukraine are making the cost of military spending “historically high” and will have “equally severe consequences for social spending.”

To keep up with Turkey, he wrote, Greece “would now have to allocate a massive percentage of its GDP to military equipment,” a scenario that “leads to very harsh austerity measures in social spending.”

El Syn noted that government’s 2026–2029 financial framework, submitted to the European Commission in November 2025, provides for nominal cuts of 9.02 percent to

the Education Ministry, 4.72 percent to Health, 12.1 percent to Infrastructure and Transport and 12.5 percent to Environment and Energy.

Kosmas writes that a “significant proportion” is “undoubtedly due to the reallocation of expenditure in the new European budget in favour of war and anti-immigration policies.”

Under the European Commission’s initial proposal for the EU budget for 2028–2034, Greece would receive nearly €12 billion less, a fall of 19.45 percent. Kosmas estimates that Greece’s share of the €160 billion in joint European Union borrowing for Ukraine will exceed €2 billion, not counting interest.

The trade union bureaucracy offers no way forward for the working class. ADEDY authorized a work stoppage only “to facilitate participation for workers who wish to attend the rallies”. Its demands—wage increases, the reinstatement of the 13th and 14th salaries, permanent hiring, “public and free education and healthcare”—are ones the Greek ruling elite has rejected for years, and it has no plans to change that fact.

The union leadership has called just one full nationwide strike this year, on February 28, and will not hold another until November 25. The private sector General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) did not strike, and its website makes no mention of this week’s protests.

From 2010, GSEE and ADEDY called dozens of one-day general strikes aimed at allowing workers to let off steam, while negotiating with successive ND and PASOK governments as they imposed austerity. In 2015, they propped up the Syriza government of Alexis Tsipras, which trampled on the referendum vote against austerity and imposed even more brutal austerity.

Today Syriza—which has collapsed to 2 percent in latest polls—dares to describe the protests as “oxygen for democracy” when it bears direct responsibility for the conditions confronting workers and youth.



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